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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the steps necessary for starting a cooperative education program for English majors. Though not all English majors can use cooperative education to advantage, such a program is an educational alternative that allows people who have no definite career goals to develop job opportunities while staying in school. Sample forms used in a cooperative education program are included. (RL)

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COOPERATIVE EDUCATION: AN ALTERNATIVE FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

(Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, April 1, 1977)

by

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Cooperative education is an academic program in which students work part time or full time at jobs directly related to their major areas. Students receive college credit for these job experiences as well as the usual salaries.

The cooperative education program is not advantageous for all English majors. But it is an exciting alternative for those majors who do not want to teach and who have no definite career goals. These are the students who so often drop out of school during the sophomore and junior years because of lack of academic and career motivation. The cooperative education program can help English Departments retain these students.

Background of Cooperative Education

Cooperative education became a part of the educational process in 1906 and grew rapidly. By 1975 over 1/3 of the nation's colleges had co-op programs. This year the government has allocated well over 10 million for funding of these programs which will train over ½ million co-op students next year.

Traditionally, cooperative education has been associated with technology students and with those students with specific salable skills. Only recently has it been associated with liberal arts students. Too often, in the past, English instructors have been puzzled by advisees who did not want to teach; they have vaguely assured them that there are many jobs for them in the business world but have done nothing to introduce them to specific work experiences. Now that English professors are becoming involved in technical writing programs and are developing close contacts with representatives

from business, industry and government agencies, they are becoming aware of all the job opportunities for English majors. They are in demand as technical writers, advertising and copy writers, radio and television production workers, real estate brokers, insurance representatives, personnel officers, writers for plant newspapers, supervisors and interviewers in government agencies, and as lower management trainees in most businesses and industries. Cooperative education can introduce English majors to these jobs.

Advantages

Cooperative education offers so many advantages to English majors. This program helps them to make realistic career choices; it allows them to try out several different careers before making a lifetime commitment. It permits them to enter the job market after graduation at salaries of 10 to 15% higher than those of other graduates. Cooperative education motivates them academically and helps them develop human relations skills. This program also gives the students some financial compensation.

But all the advantages of a cooperative education program do not lie with the students. This program benefits our English departments, our schools, and our local communities. It helps us retain the majors we already have, and it helps us attract new majors. Since almost 80% of co-op students return to their co-op employers after graduation, English majors often remain in the vicinity of the college and make sizable contributions to the community.

Types of Cooperative Education Programs

There are two types of cooperative education programs: the parallel plan and the alternate. The parallel plan combines part time work (20 hours) with a full time academic program. This plan is advantageous because the students remain full time students and their four year programs are not lengthened by cooperative education. Disadvantages of this plan include the students being tied to the local area of the college for their job experiences and their never really getting the feel of full time work in the careers they are investigating.

In the alternate plan the students work full time at jobs directly related to their major areas and then return to campus the following semester for full time academic programs. During the junior and senior years they alternate semesters of full time work with those of the on-campus academic program, eventually having two semesters of work experience -- hopefully with the same employers. One advantage of this plan is that the students can travel to a distant city to take advantage of the job opportunities that seem most suitable for them. They also get the feel of full time work. But there are two disadvantages: the traditional four year program is extended to five years, and it is often difficult to maintain close contacts with them during their work experiences.

Steps in Beginning a Cooperative Education Program

After we become convinced of the desirability of cooperative education for English majors who have no definite career goals, we must turn our attention to getting such a program started. Federal funding is available, and it may be that your school will want to

apply for Title IV D funds next fall to begin a school wide cooperative education program. You may receive as much as $20,000 to $50,000 for a 3 to 5 year period. But it is also possible to begin such a program in your English department without funding -- on an overload basis. After all, most teachers give extra professional service beyond the regular teaching load. You may be able to best serve your department and school by devoting your time and attention to cooperative education.

The first step is to explain the program to your English department faculty and convince them of its validity. You and your colleagues, along with the chairperson of the department, must make initial decisions about the program. Several cooperative education courses must be legislated through the faculty senate or through the machinery set up at your school. These courses should be numbered at the sophomore, junior and senior levels (Cooperative Education: English 200, Cooperative Education: English 300 and Cooperative Education: English 400) so for each work experience the student can enroll for a higher level course.

The members of the English department must also decide on the number of hours credit to be given for each work experience. Perhaps 3 hours for each semester of part time work and 6 hours for each semester of full time work will seem most reasonable. Letter grades or pass-fail credit may be assigned for each work experience. Application of cooperative education credits is also of prime importance. Should such courses appear as electives on the major, or should they be considered as general education credits to make up the 124 hour total?

Since co-op work experience is a learning situation, tools for evaluation of the student' performance are most important. They should be required to write a report at mid-term and one at the end of the semester, their advisors or cooperative education coordinator should visit them at least once during the semester on the job, and their employers should be asked to fill out an evaluation sheet for their work performance.

Supervision of the co-op students in the English department must also be decided upon. Each advisor can identify the English majors who will benefit from cooperative education, enroll them in the program, supervise their reports and visit them on the job and assign grades to them. It is sometimes desirable, however, to appoint a cooperative education coordinator to supervise all English majors who apply for the program.

After these initial decisions have been made, it is necessary to publicize the new program, always a difficult job. You should begin with the English faculty. Ask their help in planning the program. Ask them to list the skills that their English majors have at the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior levels, to list any experiences and techniques they will have learned at the various levels. Colleagues can be especially helpful in suggesting various jobs for which English majors are qualified (see Figure 1). After enlisting colleagues to assist in gathering information about the English majors, it is necessary to send them periodic memos and information sheets reminding them of the basic rules of the co-op program, stressing the advantages, and stressing its relevance as a learning experience (see Figure 2).

Letters, flyers and brochures ideally should be sent to each English major once a semester. At least, such information should be sent each semester to those majors who have not applied for teacher education. In such mailings, advantages of the program for the English major should be stressed, along with specific instructions on how the student can become a part of the program (see Figure 3). A feature article in the school newspaper each semester will attract candidates for the program; a reporter can be sent to interview the English majors on the job and take pictures of them at work. Sometimes the town newspaper will run such a feature. Then potential co-op employers and parents of students can better understand the program and develop an interest in it.

Publicizing a co-op program to potential employers is usually easier than anticipated (see Figure 4). Such employers must be screened carefully and only those included who can offer jobs directly related to the English major. The cooperative education coordinator must not assign employers and jobs haphazardly.

One effective way to sell potential employers on the cooperative education program is to prepare a notebook to use in discussions with them. Attractively arranged information sheets can stress the fact that co-op students cut employer recruiting costs, that this program gives employers opportunities to screen prospects for full-time employment, and that they can have input into college curriculum. Listing the steps the employers must take to become part of the co-op program assures them of its simplicity. First, the employer must assign one or more job slots in the organization to English majors at the local university, list the duties

involved in the position, determine the student's salary and fringe benefits, arrange to interview two or three students for each available job slot, and then plan to enjoy the superior work of an above average employee who is eager to test tentative career goals (see Figure 5).

Many studies have been made recently that prove the success of the co-op student, and these studies have been reported in easy to understand visuals: pie diagrams and bar charts can be used to illustrate that employers rate the work performance of their co-op students as good to excellent. Such statistics clearly show that co-op students give the employer a stable and experienced work force characterized by a high retention rate; the employer cuts his recruiting and training costs. Statistics show that co-op graduates advance faster and further in terms of promotions and merit increases (see Figure 6).

The Necessary Forms for Implementation of the Program

After we become convinced of the desirability of cooperative education for English majors and have initiated the program, it is necessary to turn our attention to the forms necessary for keeping the program in operation. Cooperative education coordinators often say that they must leave a trail of paper behind them, and this is true. Students must first fill out application forms in which they give their year of school, their local address and phone number. They must list special job areas they would like to explore and any previous work experience (see Figure 7).

After the English major reports for an interview and is selected for work, then the student and employer should sign

work agreements or contracts so there will be no later misunderstandings. The employer should list the types of activities in which the student will be involved during the work experience, the salary and fringe benefits. The co-op student affirms an understanding of the duties, salary and fringe benefits -- as well as the written periodic reports that must be submitted to the English department (see Figure 8).

The midterm report by the student describes the assignment in some detail, evaluates the work assignment in relation to tentative career goals, and encourages the student to make any other comments concerning the assignment -- comments that may reveal a problem that the coordinator may solve before the end of the semester (see Figure 9). On the final report the student again reviews the nature of the assignment, makes suggestions for a more valuable experience in the next training period and generally evaluates the work experience (see Figure 10).

A handy form for the employer's evaluation of the student's work performance is the check sheet that can be filled out in only a few minutes. Additional space must also be left for any other remarks that the employer may wish to make: a discussion of traits that may help or hinder the student's advancement and any additional remarks deemed relevant (see Figure 11).

Summary

To conclude, the cooperative education program benefits English majors, English departments, schools and communities. Our majors can develop realistic career goals, increase academic

motivation, better understand human relations, find jobs more easily after graduation, and enjoy financial compensation. English departments in our colleges and universities can attract new majors and retain currently enrolled majors through this program. Because almost 80% of the co-op students accept permanent jobs with their co-op employers, they often remain in the local community and become valued civic leaders. Certainly the rewards of a cooperative education program are many, and we must offer this alternative to those English majors who have no definite career goals.

Name_____ Department_____

I. Skills a student majoring in English would have after:

FRESHMAN YEAR _____

_____

_____

SOPHOMORE YEAR _____

_____

_____

JUNIOR YEAR _____

_____

_____

SENIOR YEAR _____

_____

_____

II. Unique techniques, equipment, experiences, etc., of English majors.

_____

_____

_____

_____

III. Types of positions for which English majors are best qualified.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Figure 1. Asking the English faculty to assist in planning the cooperative education program for English majors.

To: English Department Advisors

Subject: Cooperative Education Program for English Majors

A cooperative education program for English majors will begin at KSCP in January, 1976. The purpose of the program is to allow the student to work full time at a job directly related to his or her major area, alternating a semester of work with a semester of study on campus. He or she may also work part-time while attending school full-time. The student will be encouraged to work at least two different semesters for the same employer and will receive three to six hours credit for each semester's work. His pass-fail grade will be based on his employer's evaluation and on two written reports required by the department.

The student who will benefit most will be the English major who doesn't want to teach and who has no other definite career goal. The student who needs financial assistance will also be helped by the salary for his full-time work. These two types often drop out of school at the sophomore-junior level; this cooperative education program should give them renewed interest in their English major.

The faculty advisor should identify the eligible student and encourage him/her to contact the Cooperative Education Coordinator for job placement. The Coordinator and Department Chairman will determine the number of hours credit to be given for the work experience and the application of co-op credits to the student's total degree program.

The coordinator will supervise the mid-term and final reports, match the available jobs with the students, and will visit them on the job at least once during the semester.

Figure 2. Sample information memo for the faculty.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ALTERNATE

ACADEMIC SEMESTERS WITH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE?

Consider the Cooperative Education Program!

This program will:

1. Provide you with practical experience which will relate academic studies to actual work experience.
2. Test your career goals.
3. Confirm your choice of major.
4. Give you a better understanding of human relations.
5. Encourage excellence in your academic studies.
6. Assist you financially.

Apply early (during the freshman or sophomore year) to your advisor or to the cooperative education coordinator of the English Department for co-op work assignments during your junior-senior years. You can get 3 - 6 hours of college credit each semester--while you work full-time or part time at a job directly related to your major area. Your pass-fail grade will be based on your employer's evaluation and on the mid-term and final written reports required by the English Department. Your salary will be determined by the employer before your work assignment begins. You should contract to work at least two different semesters for the same employer.

The Cooperative Education Program will affect you, as a graduate of this college: 1) you will enter the job market with valuable practical experience and 2) your college education usually will be extended to five years instead of the usual four because of your full-time or part time work experience.

If you want to enhance your academic knowledge, your personal development and your professional preparation--combine studying with work in business, industry, government agencies, social services or private agencies.

Investigate the Co-op Program today! Contact your advisor or your department cooperative education coordinator now!

Figure 3. Flyer designed to attract English majors to the cooperative education program.

I CANNOT TELL A LIE, AMERICA

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION HELPS EMPLOYERS. . . . . .

Cost-effectiveness studies have shown co-op to be a desirable investment for employers.

Co-op students cut employee recruiting costs.

Co-op students, because of their academic background, cut training costs.

Employers have an opportunity to screen prospects for full-time employees.

Co-op students bring enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the job.

Co-op employers have input into college curriculum.

Employers benefit from up-to-date information used in colleges.

Current employees are motivated by young, eager students.

Co-op employers meet a moral obligation to make education meaningful to students while helping them finance their college studies.

As many as 80 per cent of co-op students accept full-time, permanent jobs with their co-op employers.

ALMOST 200,000 COLLEGE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CO-OP PROGRAMS TODAY.

MORE THAN 2,000 U.S. EMPLOYERS, FROM THE VERY LARGEST TO THE VERY SMALLEST, USE CO-OP STUDENTS.

ARE YOU MARCHING TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER?

TRY CO-OP. . . . . Contact:

Figure 4. Information sheet for potential co-op employers.

The KSCP Cooperative Education Plan

Our junior-senior level English majors will work in full-time job slots directly related to their major area for at least two semesters, alternating terms of practical experience with terms of school, or they can work part-time while enrolled as full-time students. They will get 3 to 6 hours of pass-fail credit for each work experience; their grades will be based on their employers evaluations (a one-page check sheet) and on the mid-term and final reports they will write for our department at the end of each term.

Advantages for the Employer

There are many advantages for the employer who assigns a job slot to KSCP, allowing the co-op coordinator to keep the position filled either by one student working part-time or by two students alternating in a full-time position over a two year period--one student from January to August and the other from August to January and then repeating the process for the second year.

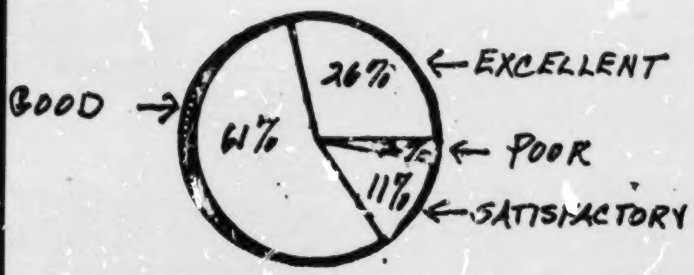
1. The employer gets a high caliber worker for a minimum wage that he himself sets.
2. The employer can generally train a co-op student more cheaply, because of his previous academic work, than someone in his established training programs.
3. The employer can identify potential permanent employees through KSCP Cooperative Education and can eliminate the usual trial and error process. Approximately 80% of co-op students return after graduation to their co-op employers for permanent employment.
4. The employer can influence the training of college students and can make an effective contribution to a Kansas college.
5. The employer can actively engage in public service for his local community and state.

Becoming a Part of the KSCP Co-op Program

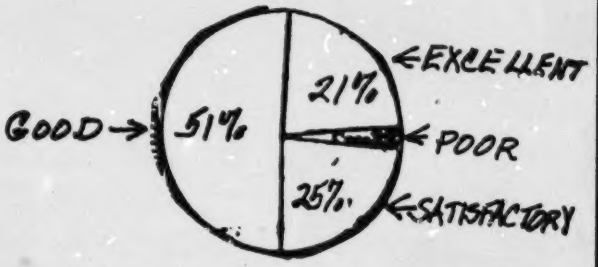
1. Assign one or more job slots in your organization to KSCP English majors.
2. List the duties involved in the position and decide whether or not the co-op employee will get the same fringe benefits enjoyed by your other full time employees.
3. Arrange with the English Department cooperative education coordinator to interview two or three students for each available job slot.
4. Plan to enjoy the superior work of an above average employee who is eager to test his career goals.

Help your organization while helping a Kansas college. Decide today to participate in the KSCP Cooperative Education Program for English majors!

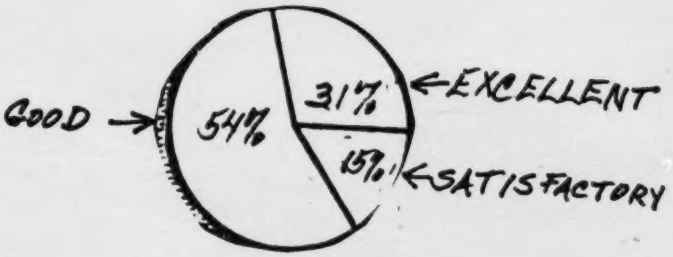
Figure 5. Information sheet for potential co-op employers.



EMPLOYEE WORK PERFORMANCE FOR CO-OP STUDENTS



EMPLOYEE RETENTION OF CO-OP STUDENTS



SALARY AND PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSION FOR CO-OP STUDENTS

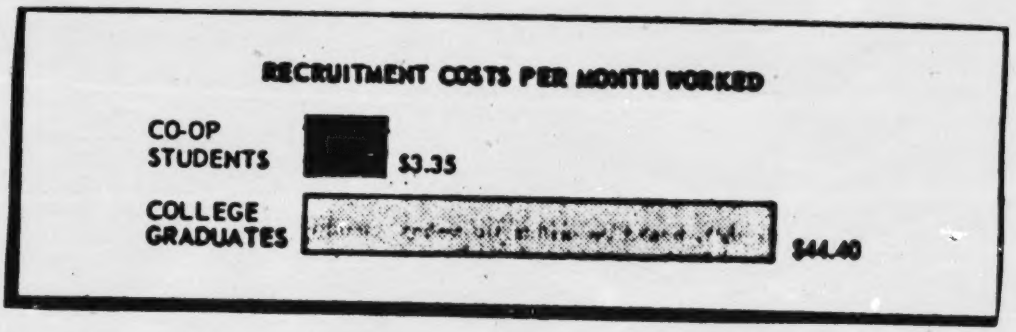


Figure 6. Pie diagrams and bar chart illustrating the advantages for co-op employers.

Name_____ Age_____ Date_____

Sr.____ Jr.____ Soph.____ Fr.____

Major_____ Minor_____

Advisor_____

Your local address_____ Local phone_____

Your permanent address_____ Phone_____

What special job area would you like to explore? Explain.

When would you like to begin your first co-op work assignment?_____

Previous Work Experience:

Date	Employer	Duties

Figure 7. Student application form.

Employer
CO-OP AGREEMENT

This is to certify that _____ is employed as a co-op student and is assigned the title of _____. During the employment period the student will be involved in the following types of activities:_____

_____

_____

_____

His beginning salary will be _____ and may be increased as his ability and other conditions warrant. His performance at the end of each semester of work will be carefully evaluated. He will _____ (will not _____) be accorded the fringe benefits enjoyed by the other full-time employees.

Signature_____ Date_____

Title_____

Company_____

Company Address_____ Phone_____

CO-OP STUDENT AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, agree to work for _____ (company, agency, institution) as my regular co-operative assignment for at least two different semesters. I will follow the same rules and regulations as other full-time or part-time employees of this organization.

I also agree to accept the rate of pay stated (_____), this amount to be increased as my ability and other conditions warrant.

I understand that during this work period I will also turn in the written periodic reports required by my major department.

I understand that this agreement becomes effective upon my acceptance of the position offered.

Signature_____ Date_____

Address_____ Phone_____

City_____ State_____ ZIP_____ Social Security No._____

Figure 8. Employer and student contracts.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM
KANSAS STATE COLLEGE OF PITTSBURG
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762

Please Fill in and Return

MID-TERM REPORT ON THE TRAINING PERIOD

Date_____

Student_____

Date reported for work_____ Social Security No._____

Employer_____ Rate of Pay_____
(Include division, area, office etc.)

Hours per Week_____

Major field of study_____ From_____a.m. to _____p.m.

Nature of your assignment is some detail_____

_____

_____

_____

Name of your immediate supervisor_____ Title_____

Do you feel your assignment to date has helped you understand your field of interest (your major) any better?

No_____ Yes_____

List the cooperative education course in which you are currently enrolled:_____

_____

_____
(Name and Number)

Add any other comments concerning your assignment, working conditions, etc:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
(Use the other side if more space is needed)

Figure 9. Student's mid-term report.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Kansas State College of Pittsburg
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762

FINAL REPORT ON THE TRAINING PERIOD

Student's Name_____ Social Security No._____

Student's Address_____
(Street) (City) (State) (ZIP)

Total credit hours to date_____ Major_____ Employer_____

Supervisor_____

Nature of the Assignment (Explain in detail)_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date the assignment started_____ Date the training period ends_____

Rate of Pay_____ Gross earnings for the entire period_____

Completed course_____ No. of hours of pass/fail for this co-op
(Name and Number)
assignment_____

Suggestions for a more successful experience in your next training period. (Can the Cooperative Education Coordinator or your Employer help?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On the back of this page, in 150 to 250 words, please give your views of your experience on this training period. Did you feel it had educational and/or training value? Discuss as fully as you like.

Figure 10. Student's final report.

Cooperative Education Program

Pittsburg, Kansas 66762

Employer's Evaluation of the Cooperative Student

Name _____ Class _____ Course _____

Training Period _____ Assignment _____

Employer _____

INSTRUCTIONS: The immediate supervisor will evaluate the student objectively, comparing him with other students of comparable academic level, with other personnel assigned the same or similarly classified jobs, or with individual standards.

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

- ☐ Exceptionally well accepted
- ☐ Works well with others
- ☐ Gets along satisfactorily
- ☐ Has some difficulty working with others
- ☐ Works very poorly with others

ATTITUDE – APPLICATION TO WORK

- ☐ Outstanding in enthusiasm
- ☐ Very interested and industrious
- ☐ Average in diligence and interest
- ☐ Somewhat indifferent
- ☐ Definitely not interested

JUDGMENT

- ☐ Exceptionally mature
- ☐ Above average in making decisions
- ☐ Usually makes the right decision
- ☐ Often uses poor judgment
- ☐ Consistently uses bad judgment

DEPENDABILITY

- ☐ Completely dependable
- ☐ Above average in dependability
- ☐ Usually dependable
- ☐ Sometimes neglectful or careless
- ☐ Unreliable

ABILITY TO LEARN

- ☐ Learns very quickly
- ☐ Learns readily
- ☐ Average in learning
- ☐ Rather slow to learn
- ☐ Very slow to learn

QUALITY OF WORK

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below average
- ☐ Very poor

ATTENDANCE: ☐ Regular ☐ Irregular

PUNCTUALITY: ☐ Regular ☐ Irregular

OVER-ALL PERFORMANCE:

Outstanding	Very Good	+ Average –	Marginal	Unsatisfactory

What traits may help or hinder the student's advancement?

Additional Remarks (over if necessary):

(In this section please comment on personal appearance, dress and grooming.)

This report has been discussed with student ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Signed) _____ Date _____
(Immediate Supervisor)

Figure 11. Employer's evaluation sheet.